The COMMONWEAL

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THE WEEK 243
CONFITEOR (Verse) *Alastair W. R. Miller* 246
THREE WARS IN ONE *William A. Orton* 247
WHAT, THEN, DOES DR. NEWMAN MEAN? *Anne Fremantle* 250
COMMUNICATIONS 253
Hollywood — The American and English Child—The Lepers' Christmas—Food Parcels.
THE STAGE *Kappo Phelan* 254
THE SCREEN *Philip T. Hartung* 256
BOOKS OF THE WEEK 257
Prize Stories of 1947—The Best Short Stories of 1947—Lions Under the Throne—Rehearsal for Conflict—Miracles, a Preliminary Study—Step Down, Elder Brother—The Good Night at San Gabriel—Echoes of the Hunting Horn—The Stoic—Death Valley Handbook.
THE INNER FORUM *Leo J. Trese* 261
Report from Lafayette

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The Prescription of Hard Work

IN THE all-round geniality which the Christmas Season engenders, it is easier to feel that things are working out all right here. Surely the dire warnings of Mr. Truman are exaggerated; he demands inflation controls in order to go on record. When Assistant Secretary of Labor Gibson tells the New Jersey CIO that prices are so high that wage earners have to dip into their savings to "make ends meet," he can't mean many of them at present wage rates. And when Mr. Taft, David Lawrence and star speakers before the assembled NAM say that the trouble is that we aren't working long or hard enough—and that at the same time we are spending too much money —they are simply repeating themselves. When, to cap it all, the New Jersey CIO adopts a resolution calling for a thirty-hour week in the face of the terrific shortages of consumer goods, somebody must be fooling.

The spectacle is unhappily quite familiar. It is the unresolved argument about the "take." No one is accusing the American worker of loafing. The NAM, for instance, wants a longer work week principally so that there will be an end to time and a half for overtime. And no doubt the Jersey CIO is thinking primarily in terms of overtime pay in its demand for a thirty-hour week at the same wages; it is not thinking wistfully of more time to spend at the bowling alley, in field or stream, at movies or the local tavern, or even helping around the house. It wants a bigger share of the income.

Philip Murray and other American labor leaders refer again and again to huge corporate profits—which, indeed, continue to increase. This phenomenon they couple with wages inadequate to meet inflated living costs. The logic supporting a third round of wage rises appears to them unanswerable. And to a certain degree it is, except for one other factor which is undeniable. A third round of wage increases would touch off a corresponding wave of price rises. Not only would the increase in real wages be short-lived, but it would imperil the basic economic structure upon which wages themselves depend; and workers live closest to the margin of subsistence.

But does this mean that workers must continue contentedly to bear the heaviest burden of America's present inflated living costs? Is the only way they are to protect their homes and their savings to increase their productivity still farther by longer and harder hours, thereby building up a bigger take for all to share, themselves included? There are other means of combating national inflation. Mr. Truman's ten-point program points to several feasible means. At the present stage of operations Congress, if it will, can effectively check the latest wave of instalment buying, curb speculation in commodities by greatly raising margin requirements and set up allocations for steel, grains and other basic commodities wherever that would help. All these and other government measures to combat inflation are seldom popular —difficult politically—essential as they are right now. But if the wage-hour question is fought and settled primarily on the basis of group interest, either way, everybody stands to lose.

More and Worse

THE NICKEL subway ride has been a permanent New York specialty over changing years and through varied political campaigns. Now, unless a lot more experienced politicians than we are astonishingly wrong, the five-cent fare is on the way out. New York City needs millions more dollars a year to keep going, and hundreds of millions of dollars to build new things that have to be built: more subways, hospitals, schools, etc.

City problems, all over the country, have reached a stage of unstable crisis since the war ended. Of course, the problems are hardly anything, practically whimsies, contrasted to those of the war-injured cities of Europe and Asia. But in their setting they have something of the same

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effect on inhabitants, on the patience, on the reason. The spread between our cities as they are, and what they might be, is stretched so far that the tension worries politicians and annoys greatly an increasing number of normally patient citizens.

The five-cent fare is just a local sign. It costs money to maintain New York and every other city. The transit fare is one collection toward meeting the expense of living and working in town. Real estate taxes, license fees, admission and amusement and business taxes, and a great many other miscellaneous fees go into city treasuries from every urban pocketbook. The transit fare is very like a tax, like a tax that is not levied in proportion to the income of the payer. It seems that in order to keep the municipalities going, money has to be got by borrowing, wheedling, beguiling, confusing, bludgeoning—by every sort of effort which changing constitutions permit. But the money goes into the same metropolitan hopper; it is temporizing or self-deceiving to focus argument on one special resource, like the subway.

Transit—"rapid" or terribly clogged, dirty and slow—is just one city problem of circulation and traffic. There's hardly a city in the country that doesn't boast how its own traffic is really the impossibly worst. And the circulation problem is tied in tight with the housing problem—one of the universal cements of continental understanding. Taxes, housing and traffic are a three-in-one problem which brings urbanites everywhere into a state of mutually understood pain and impatience.

The problem can't be solved by attacking one corner of it. Our cities are in terrible shape, and the bigger the city, the worse the condition. The over-all cost of doing business and living in big cities as they are today is not one of the least consequential forces of inflation. And wearing waste is a cancerously growing factor of the cost. Paying eight cents, or ten cents or a quarter, for a ride which as a ride is obviously not worth a penny, is not going to settle the civic problems. Some slightly rational conceptions of town and country planning must be added to the income and expenditure if the cities are not going to get worse and worse. Certainly a tithe of the added subway fares here and of the bump in bus fares there should go to municipal and regional research and planning bodies, for the enlightenment of citizens and the direction of governments. Good money is going out after bad, and, so far, the cities and their suburbs are simply getting uglier, costlier, more wasteful and more dissatisfying places to try to live and to breathe and to carry on the work of the world.

The Third Hour

IN A RECENT, and very moving editorial, the New York *Times* described a scene at Lake Success: the rare occasion of a minor agreement. The pathetic, tiny flame of hope that wanly flickered then had warmed even the newsprint, as it evidently had also the chilled hearts of the gathered representatives, the atmosphere of whose meetings seems generally more to resemble that of a stockyard filled with driven cattle scenting their certain and proximate end, than that of apostles awaiting the coming of Pentecostal fire.

The constant leakage of goodwill, dribbling and drooling from the world's many worn-out washers is nowhere better exemplified than in the various abortive attempts of Christendom to reunite. Ever since the Emperor Julian the Apostate, in the third century of our era, collected representatives of the differing Christian denominations together, and, watching from a balcony, angered at their disagreements, bidding his courtiers "Observe well, how these Christians love one another," the rents in the seamless robe have been a source of delight to unbelievers and of disedification to the faithful.

The Third Hour, a privately issued publication, of which a Russian exemplar appeared in 1946, and a French one earlier this year, has for its object the preparation of spiritual action. Named for that Third Hour, when the Holy Ghost first filled those who were together in one house, it arose out of contacts shared by a group of friends, Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. It offers its pages "for a wider exchange of views, in the social, philosophical and religious field, attempting to solve the spiritual crisis of our time." It is, for all such lofty ambitions, very unpretentious: humble in tone, almost casual, but admirably positive; and, in its very simplicity, excellently practical. It doesn't attempt to bite off more than it can chew; it makes no sweeping statements, proffers no panaceas.

Yet by its appreciation of the contribution throughout history, which is continued today, of Orthodox Christian thought and piety to the Christian heritage, the contributors to *The Third Hour* approach Russia on the one plane—that of charity—where neither political interference nor lack of manners can create a breach, and at the only level at which no interruption can be anything but beside the point: that point being the collective movement forward of Christendom.

There is ample variety in the first English issue: articles by such Protestants as Denis de Rougemont and Lord Halifax, first hand accounts of Christian action by friends of the late Mother Mary Skobzstoff, with details of her last days at Ravensbruck, and by Dorothy Day. But perhaps the most exciting single item in this little, modest magazine is the page telling of that Paris ecumenical meeting, presided over simultaneously by the Archbishop, Cardinal Suhard, by Father Rodianoff (a representative of the Metropolitan, Seraphim) and by the Lutheran bishop, Pastor Wheatcroft, which Helen Iswolsky described for THE COMMONWEAL a few weeks ago.

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One of the greatest problems of propaganda is how to sell good news; such incidents as that recorded above, such magazines as *The Third Hour,* are hardly headline stuff amongst the clash of continents. Yet even the angels offered peace on earth only to men of goodwill.

Christmas

IT DOES not depend on whether you are in a night club or in a church, or whether the church is filled with people, or whether the priest is alone when he says the midnight Mass, and then the other two; the event is not created by belief or destroyed by incredulity. It is not the way it happens with Santa Claus. It has nothing to do with reindeer.

It has not even anything to do with the cathedrals that still stand or with the cathedrals that are in ruins. It is not magnified by the number of Catholics there are in the world, or diminished by the number of Mohammedans. The battles of Christendom have not saved it when they were won—at Tours, at Lepanto—or in any way annulled it when they were lost. It exists outside the earth, as does the sun; and outside the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, the entire system of space, outside and beyond space, outside and before and after time.

It is not an incident in a system of human thought and it is not subject to human thought. Christmas is unaffected by anything we think about it, and it does not disappear when we cease to think about it. It is there, still there, when we are too miserable to think about it. And it is there, still there, when we think about it as something that we knew and is gone.

The way it was when the gardener went up the hill a little distance and then came back with the tree, bringing it into the house the way they take a dead body out of the house—if possible without the children seeing it. And also, then, there would be a room closed for a time but, at Christmas, it would be so that the bright red sled could be placed at the foot of the tree, the bright tinsel strung in the branches, the candles adjusted.

Or the way it was at Les Baux, in Provence, where there was no snow, but the moonlight over the bare hills, and the tourists coming in automobiles, but a few shepherds all the same, and in Italy too there were shepherds with bagpipes, and, in Calabria, there were the same bare hills.

In America, it is when you no longer live in the same house in the same village, or when you are ill and alone, that Christmas is something that you only remember. But there are always people who are getting ready to have a Christmas, to forget or to remember; there are always people in America who are looking forward to Christmas, and what happens to them afterward is another story; there are always parents in America who are preparing to give a Christmas to their children, preparing to introduce their children to a fact that is always there, and some of the children will remember the day, later, in joy, and some in desolation.

But, in Europe, in certain parts of Europe, it is unlikely that these preparations for Christmas can be made as they are in America. The European postmen are not carrying packages to every door. In Europe it is not just that a man has gone to live in a city, and that Christmas is not the same when a man is living alone in a room; in Europe it is as if everyone had left all that he ever knew, as if everyone were in uncertainty. It is not just that there are no packages; it is also as if there were no homes to send them to; as if there were no sure address to which anything could be sent.

It is almost the way it was in Palestine when the event took place. It is a time again when civilizations are not sure of themselves; it is a time, once more, when a man looks round him and does not know what will happen to his country or to his children. Everything may turn out wonderfully—and perhaps not. It is a time when everyone is insecure, and many in great distress—a time of trouble.

So it is not a time when things look the way they do on Christmas cards, and it is not a time when it does much good to remember the way things looked in the lost days of happiness, in Europe, or anywhere else in the world. The German Christmas will not be a happy one, nor the Italian, nor the Jugoslav—no matter what people do. That is, it will not be happy in the way it was, with the lights of the church shining out on the dark fields, and then the lights in the house, the family gathered in the house, protected and sure in the house. The men who are still in concentration camps, the men, outside the camps, who are gathering arms in order to put other men in other camps, the innocent and the enraged, will not have this year a traditionally merry Christmas. It is hardly possible.

And so, this year, one perhaps had best think of the event itself, with joy, of course, but perhaps with a certain degree of awe. As if we were looking at a place that we love and may be leaving, at a person we love and already may have left. As if we stood with an irrevocable decision to be made—if we have not already made it.

It is this way. The peoples of the world have arms now that can destroy the world. They have no arms to destroy the event which took place on Christmas Day. That event, the Incarnation, forbids mankind to destroy a world which is not man's alone. It is that place, Bethlehem (which is the world), the Person born there, whom now we must decide whether we are to abandon or not.

C. G. PAULDING

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Confiteor

"mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa": The Confiteor.
"Every body should be unasuming not asuming": Marjory Fleming, 1810. . . .

I.

Let us consider again with an ancient despair
The smallness of man, and his outrageous pride,
And his comfort in falsehood; how he will dare
To worship himself, while still the remorseless tide
Of disasters and disgusts and the soul's dismay
Laps at his pitiful fortress from every side;
How he will patch that fortress to last out the day
With boulders of ignorance, bound with a cement
Compounded of vanity, founded upon clay;
Or how he will know his weakness, and make intent
To be stronger with truth . . . but, in the slothful wood,
Aging among flowers, he does not do as he meant;
How he will enforce a particular dream of good,
Producing a general evil; and how disrupt
What poise he may find, to gratify a quick mood;
And how (let our vocabularies be abrupt,
And let us speak surely where we may be sure)
Man is corrupting, corrupted, and corrupt—
Unkind, unwise, unfaithful, and impure—
Leaning only upon himself, which, of all creation,
Of all creation is the thing most insecure,
Since on his honor is the shadow of humiliation
And on his will the shadow of capitulation
And on his love the shadow of abomination.
Through my most grievous fault.

II.

Let us remember again the days of our youth,
Lit with response, by spirit made ever warm,
When the rain anointed, and the wind had no tooth;
When the tumbled leaves revealed the holier form,
And the blue smoke flattened on the turbulent air,
And the Almighty was resonant throughout the storm;
And when the Spring beat like the drum of a fair
Calling to sport—the ecstatic breezes shook
The light on the trees trembled, the push of care
Melted in sounds and odors; where to look
Was the mind's solitary and delicious fret—
Whether on cloud-shades counterflowing the brook,
Or on the chestnut ceremonially set
With yellow candles, or on the exquisite veil
Bridaling the hawthorn hedges, or on the wet
Wealth of the turned-up earth, or on the pale
Primrose of the wood or the intense bluebell,
Cowslip of the hill or cuckoo-flower of the dale . . .
When these, and much which I can no longer tell,
Raptured the senses, still the utmost delectation
Was inner—an assent which Winter might not quell,
A free acquiescence, a glad participation,
An humility of manhood, a pride of adoration:
Which is now dissolved in a blank desolation.
Through my most grievous fault.

III.

Let us regard again our childhood lost,
Our history poisoned, our destiny self-denied,
When little is left to us but to count the cost;
When we who incurred the cost through unbased pride
Are lucky if we count it, being more disposed
To hurry inanely, not knowing that we have died;
When we who are dead have eyes and ears so closed
We are woodenly content with a homemade dark
And have no answer, not hearing the question posed;
When we, whose aspirations like to the lark
Were made for soaring, and with such sweet music too,
Crouch, being clods, sunless in dumps, and stark;
When we being atrophied in the organs of rue
Honor, and proportion, divert our vigor of blood
From the will to make to the passion to undo,
And, envying the bright grass, turn the fields to mud,
And, envying affection, fossilize the heart,
And, envying the just and brave, undyke a flood
Of fears and disgusts, to crack the world apart
With arid violence and dissimulation;
When the sole glint in the globe is the taper of art,
And, for the rest, a pall of disintegration,
Crammed with cruelty and imbecile negation,
Lies upon the earth, from nation to nation.
Through my most grievous fault.

IV.

Let us reason again with an universal awe
The eternal Being of God, His absolute
Entity and mystery, and His absolute law,
His absolute proclamation, though He be quite mute,
His absolute foresight, though He be quite blind,
And His absolute deafness to violin or flute;
And when we stagger, having such God in mind,
Let us not think that therefore He is not—
Let us not, incomprehending, therefore unbind
Our manhood's cords, by hacking through the knot
Which cannot in fact be unraveled, thus to claim
An ostensible liberty in which we rot;
For however we may fidget, argue, or blame,
We live but in His illimitable thought
And should be nameless but for His secret name;
And however we have scratched and screamed and fought
To make ourselves dominant and unclean,
It still remains that we alone are as naught—
It still remains that we are what we have been,
And shall be so to the ultimate generation;
While ever about us, ever to be unseen,
Ever to be unheard, and beyond violation,
Blazes the Godhead; though, in our perturbation,
His image be lost to us by lack of contemplation.
Through my most grievous fault.

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V.

Let us rejoice again with an ancient joy
That the Son, the lord of childhood and of Spring,
Hidden, is whole among us; that though we destroy
Bridges and reputations, though we cling
Close to our dear damnation, still, in the hell
Of our churning souls—a bright anonymous king—
He hangs upon the Cross, and wishes us well;
That though the Maker be indivisibly One
The Sufferer is intermediate; that though we rebel,
Though we omit the Father and revile the Son,
The Father is not omissible, and the Son is still
Smiling upon us who think ourselves undone;
That still the Son, though vulgar remorses chill
The repentant love within us, beckons us in
To a not impossible springtime, vowed to fulfil
Childhood upon us, by dint of the violin,
And the flute, and the simple song, and the sigh of grace,
And the road, and the light of the inn;
That still the Son, with reposefully radiant face,
Without impatience or agitation,
Waits for the right time and the right place—
Waits for some distant murmur of supplication,
With a sweet look, with a mild elation:
Waits on the Tree of Agony and Desecration.
Through my fault,
Through my fault,
Through my own most grievous fault.

ALASTAIR W. R. MILLER.

Three Wars in One

William A. Orton

AS FAR BACK as 1911 one of the wisest of British liberals — L. T. Hobhouse — remarked that "the scare has superseded the vision as the moving force in our external relations." Since that time the scare has become endemic. We live, move and have our being in a chronic nightmare that dominates all our acts, our thoughts and our policies. Universal anxiety marks the modern neurosis, not only in this but in all other countries. And as the neurotic finds cause for terror on every hand, and cannot be reassured by ordinary processes, so the public mind responds abnormally to every occasion or pretext for fear, lacking the health, the wholeness, to face reality without hysteria. The mutual recriminations of Americans and Russians as to war-mongering would have still more point if they were aimed at scare-mongering. The Russians are just as much scared of us as we are of them, and with just as much reason. The scare-monger is in both cases uniquely effective, because he alone makes sense to those who, like himself, are living inside the nightmare. On our side the recent writings of Mr. Bullitt furnish a striking example. A featured article in *Life* Magazine for October 13, 1947, opens thus: "To prevent the domination of China by any power which might eventually mobilize the 450 million Chinese for war against us is a vital interest of the United States." By the end of the article the conditional mood has passed, almost imperceptibly, into the indicative: "If China falls into the hands of Stalin, all Asia, including Japan, will sooner or later fall into his hands. The manpower and resources of Asia *will be* mobilized against us" (my italics). It is not necessary to deny the remote possibility; the point is that we are preconditioned to discount the remoteness. So it seems unreasonable, or even unpatriotic, to ask when or why; to inquire just what is implied by that opening verb, prevent; to remark that if the 450 million Chinese are ever mobilized for anything (it has never yet happened) they might prefer something else to do; to suggest that by that time our official plans for world peace might actually be getting somewhere. No, we want to be scared. No one can guarantee the future, and our neurosis is impervious to reassurance. Thus again, in an *American Mercury* article for June, 1947, Mr. Bullitt is able to get away with this: "140 million Americans, however brave and well equipped they may be, cannot in the long run resist an attack *by all the other inhabitants of the earth.* If we are to survive we must . . .," etc., etc. Again, note the easy transition from the remote hypothesis to the present imperative; and nobody, not even a Christian, raises an eyebrow. It was not in such a mood that any people ever achieved greatness, or any faith made its mark on world history.

To expose the roots of the modern neurosis is beyond my present intention. As MacArthur said on a memorable occasion "the problem of peace is ultimately a theological problem." But something may be gained by an analysis of the problem in terms of what economists call a "first approximation." If in this the term "war" is used, it is simply because that term is finding its way back into current approbation via the expression "the cold war." A cold war can easily be warmed up: it tastes better that way. But using the term as it were under protest, we have

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first to recognize that there are, not one, but three "wars" now going on. They are:

1. The war of great-power politics, in which the USA and the USSR are the heavyweights that draw the big money.

2. The war of so-called communism versus free enterprise, which is a free-for-all going on everywhere, by no means coincident or synonymous with the former.

3. The ideological war of aggressive atheism and its numerous fellow-travelers against Catholic Christianity.

The beginning of sanity is to avoid identifying these three contests, and especially to prevent the tactics and emotions of the second and third from being subsumed into the first.

★

1. The great-power contest is no novelty, except to Americans. Eighty years ago the Russians, by building a few more miles of railroad toward the frontiers of Afghanistan, could move the British fleet all the way round the Cape on the exterior lines of communication, and the British regiments (including mine, which bears the motto *Primus in Indis*) up into the mountain passes of the Pamirs: an adventurous but very expensive journey (*vide Kipling*). The Russians rather enjoyed doing it as a sideplay in the European struggle, and the French (they were not always our allies) rather enjoyed lending them the money. The "Truman doctrine" marks the official entry of the United States into this familiar geo-political arena. Fundamentally, Russian policy does not change; it is determined by the centrifugal drive of the Slavic and Mongolian peoples toward the oceanic fringe where all the high civilizations have arisen. Since the elimination of the military systems of west and east that constituted, in modern times, the principal barriers, plus the abandonment of India, the situation is more favorable to the Slav than it has been for centuries. Moreover, biological as well as geographical circumstances indicate that a merely negative policy of containment offers no permanent solution. Within a few decades the costs of such a policy can become unbearable, and the results disastrous.

The Russians see that policy, and nothing else, in every move we make; and their conviction is not a new one. Stalin recently reminded his people of the invasion of their country in 1919 by American forces (among others) and of its failure. They are now concerned not merely to resist the supposed encirclement, but to forestall it; and the tragic blunders of our wartime diplomacy have given them an unhoped-for advantage, which they exploit to the full. They employ the familiar techniques of sphere-of-influence strategy with a ruthlessness that shocks us; and in our just resentment we are tempted to substitute consideration of means for consideration of ends. From the short-run point of view, everything—in the way of exports, for example—that "strengthens Russia" is to be avoided, and Truman has been under severe pressure to enforce a boycott. But boycott is a means of coercion that has proved exceedingly dangerous; it usually leads to further types of coercion and counter-coercion, of which third parties may be the victims. Moreover, from the world point of view (if there is such a thing) the economic advancement of undeveloped areas is ipso facto an asset, even if it is done by the Russians—as, for example, in south-central Asia. Such achievement, under present circumstances, incidentally tends to increase the centrifugal pressure, and therefore the great-power complex. So far it would appear that Russian political and economic activity in Persia has, despite all the excitement, been mainly confined to the zone agreed upon with the British in 1907, though undoubtedly undercover factors are at work on both sides; but a farsighted world policy would consider the possibility, as well as the problems, of a peaceful extension of Russian transportation facilities to the Gulf of Oman. It is unlikely that the Russians, no matter who or what is ruling in Moscow, will permanently assent to the movement of maritime traffic from their sole southern outlet under the muzzle of American guns.

The difficulty is that the nightmare theory of international relations precludes even discussion of rearrangements that might in themselves be of general as well as particular benefit. We talk of such measures as "concessions" to a rival rather than as investments in world community. Risky investments? Yes, indeed: one sets down such arguments as this with an almost nightmare feeling of risk. But is it not even more risky to cope with reality from inside the nightmare? Even when you are wide awake you may still fall downstairs; that is no argument for sleepwalking.

★

2. In short, it is wiser to face the great-power problem for what it is, with its economic and geo-political roots and difficulties, than to complicate it still further with the ideological issues—which is precisely what the Russians intend us to do. Not that those issues are less important, or altogether irrelevant; but that the lines of solution in the three cases are not necessarily identical, nor even parallel. There was plenty of atheistic communism in Europe (including Russia) long before 1917. Solutions to what we termed were 2 and 3—the communist and religious issues—may be as much hampered by the obsession with war number one as that may be by mixing it in with the other conflicts. The power-politics issue does not admit of *any* terminal solution—not even under a world government, not even by a mili-

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tary defeat of Russia: it will still be there. It is a matter of establishing what someone has called "a modus vivendi world" that can cope peaceably *and continuously* with the vicissitudes of group life on this unstable and shrinking planet. That is not so in the other cases. As *L'Osservatore Romano* pointed out in a highly authoritative article last June, the politico-economic struggle on the material plane admits in principle of solution by compromise "unless this possibility is precluded by a will to wage war at all costs." If, continued *L'Osservatore,* the struggle for existence is frankly recognized all round and kept clear of ideological warfare, a peaceable approach, though difficult, is not inherently ruled out provided it is really desired. What makes war inevitable is the assumption that peace is impossible. The same note was even more clearly sounded by Count della Torre on November 21, 1947. It would seem to follow that no actions of ours, no matter how great the provocation, should encourage the assumption that peace is impossible.

But, it will be said, the other side mixes the issues. More accurately, it mixes the techniques; and it does so quite deliberately. The Russians are far too toughminded to wage war, or even risk it, for any abstract cause as such. No sane people would. The whole story of their ideological shifts since 1936 is evidence of this. They would use vegetarianism or nudism as they now use communism and (sometimes) atheism if it suited their purpose. The communist issue is not necessarily a Russian issue; it is the issue of hunger and desperation and avarice against the status quo policies of those who are still relatively secure and comfortable. Let us not forget that all major revolutionary movements have ended up by being national, not international; and that is particularly true of the Bolshevik revolution. One would not deny, nor wish to deny, that among the intellectuals are many to whom the communist creed is nothing short of an international religion, which they serve with a devotion that many a Christian might emulate; but if they suppose that the rulers of Russia share their devotion to the point of sacrificing the objectives of our war number one to those of the other two, they have yet another disillusion coming to them.

To Europe the real menace is that of nihilism rather than communism. Even at this late hour, the blood of Europe is too deeply sanctified for its peoples to embrace atheistic communism on its merits as a creed; and there is no earthly reason why they should accept it as a rationalization of surrender to Russia. Their tragedy is a historical one. Europe scrapped its inner unity a long time ago. If, as seems likely, it cannot produce "good Europeans" any longer, neither American dollars nor American guns can save it: not even though we ruin ourselves trying.

3. War number three—the struggle against Catholic Christianity—is probably more intense right here in America than it is in Russia and her satellites. To put it on the lowest plane, the Russians are not going to weaken themselves for war number one by over-insistence on any non-essential issues: i.e., non-essential to their major purpose as they see it. But further, it is far too soon to despair of the Russian people as members of the Mystical Body. The traditional Erastianism of the Orthodox Church does not preclude the possibility of a genuine, if limited, revival of religion; and while that might not much affect the fundamental lines of Russian policy, it might assist in mitigating the future temper if other circumstances permit. Much of what has transpired in Vienna and Budapest, as formerly in Spain, is sheer barbarism (of which no peoples involved in war are altogether guiltless) and the civilizing mission of the Faith is oversimplified and underestimated if we identify it too closely with any current issue of power-politics or economics. The task is so great that we are always tempted to do so, and doing so to fall back upon weapons and methods appropriate only to those lesser spheres. But we are sent "as lambs among wolves."

It is very natural that Catholics, as good citizens of their respective countries, should tend to identify the cause of righteousness and civilization with that of their particular nation; nor are they required to deny that there are differences. Yet even if all nations were Catholic there would still be a temporal order—and occasionally a temporal disorder! The temporal order does not tend toward any final utopia, as the Holy Father has often reminded us; it does not, and should not, offer "the senseless hope of a millenium of universal happiness" (address of September 1, 1944). In the temporal sphere, change is of the essence, and peace itself is a process, not a stasis. The Church's mission is so to affect the unending process of temporal adjustment that the process itself, not merely its articulated goals, shall enrich and purify the human spirit. That, surely, is the intention of the divine will; and we risk blasphemy when we pray that it be done on earth without an act of faith in the possibility.

While agreeing about the danger of identifying *the "three wars," we still feel that the three cannot be* isolated. *To the extent that there is any force in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, and to the extent it is followed, the theory and practice of communism are one—and so the wars mingle. From their position, means and ends can be separated even less than from ours. Too radical distinctions appear to lead to shaky judgments the same way that too undiscriminating identifications do.* (The Editors)

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What, then, does Dr. Newman Mean?

Anne Fremantle

THIS WAS Charles Kingsley's contemptuous question, whose vulgar ribald effrontery was superbly and immortally answered by one of the greatest autobiographies ever written, that is also one of the most brilliant pieces of apologetic in the English language. Poor Kingsley has not survived the iconoclasm of the twentieth century: his sweetly pretty "Water-Babies" is now known to be full of rabelaisian innuendoes (he re-read Rabelais every year) and the British Museum is proving a rich mine of wonderfully nasty drawings and writings from his inhibited pen. But we also, now that the tumult and shouting of celebration and centennialization which marked the hundredth anniversary of Newman's conversion has died down, can ask Kingsley's question, albeit respectfully.

It was on the dark, rainy, autumnal evening of October 8th, 1845, that the Passionist Father Dominic, a "simple, holy man" as Newman called him, who spoke practically no English, came to Littlemore and received the submission of the author of Tract 90, of the central figure of the Oxford Movement, one of the most eminent and revered of Englishmen, then as now. But what, today, does, or can, John Henry Newman mean to us?

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of that long, great life, completely spanning the nineteenth century, and broken so neatly into two, rent so completely asunder by his conversion, is the tremendous burden of loneliness, and the magnitude of the intellectual agony. Even before he came into the Church, Newman writes of himself that though he loved friends, they came unsought; and natural beauty he dared not love. Hardly more than a child, he felt certain that God had called him to the single life. And the nineteen years immediately following his abjuration were, of course, particularly mortified and tenebrous, a dark night not of the soul only, but of the completely eclipsed mind and personality. Certainly the most famous Oxford professor of his day, certainly the most discussed figure in the Church of England, he fell immediately into an oblivion so blanketed and profound, that the tomb could hardly have swallowed him more completely. Indeed, until Charles Kingsley's ill-bred review of Froude's History of England appeared at Christmas, 1863, in Macmillan's Magazine, and by its personal gibe at Newman's veracity, and by its impugning of the truthfulness of any and every Catholic priest, goaded Newman out of the obscurity to which his superiors had consigned him, he was so utterly and entirely forgotten that few people even remembered he was still alive.

His letters are anguished. "You may think how lonely I am," he cries, and in his private journal wrote that he was treated as "some wild incomprehensible beast, a spectacle for Dr. Wiseman to exhibit to strangers, as himself being the hunter to capture it." For thirty-two years all Newman saw of Oxford, that he loved above all places earthly, were her spires from the train; yet, as he lamented to a friend: "It was at Oxford, and by my parochial sermons, that I had influence. All that is past." And, with bitter irony, he concludes, "Alas, that religion, which is so delightful as a vision, should be so distasteful as a reality."

For seven years, his chief work was in exile, attempting to found in Ireland a university which almost nobody wanted, with powers no one would grant him, finding nothing but "indifference, misunderstanding, hostility." His superior, Archbishop Cullen, refused him his confidence, and "has treated me from the first like a scrub, and you will see he will never do otherwise," as Newman wrote. For Newman found nothing but the coldest comfort from his fellow Catholics. Suspected both by the English hierarchy and by the Irish, he was "disappointed, desponding and sore."

Even after the "Apologia Pro Vita Sua" had, in a matter of weeks, been recognized as a religious masterpiece, as a work of genius, causing "Newman's long-forgotten name to leap into national prominence," members of his own communion thought the book "egotistical and expressive of self-admiration," and he later composed the "Grammar of Assent" in "haunting fear" of those Catholics "by whom every word I publish will be malevolently scrutinized, and every expression which can possibly be perverted sent straight to Rome. . . . I shall be fighting *under the lash.*"

From his first wrestlings with his own uncompromising integrity, which prevented his taking the

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Anglican sacrament beside Archbishop Whately when he had come to disagree with him, until, in sunset scarlet, he became "the poor clothes horse man, senile and decrepit, who, in stone, invites our pity on the Brompton Road," in spite of "the large draughts of intellectual day" which he continually quaffed, Newman's life was a long dying alone—to use a phrase of Pascal's, Newman had applied to himself. So that when he tells us that God still knows what He is about "if I am in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. . . . He may take away my friends, He may throw me among strangers, He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me—still He knows what He is about" we may believe him.

Nor was it God only, Who, to quote Saint Teresa, treated His friends so badly. Newman intensely disliked himself. Seldom has anyone found himself so dreary, so boring to live with, or life such a long day's march. Alone in Sicily he wrote, "I seemed to see more and more my utter hollowness, to be nearly hollow, with little love, little self-denial. I believe I have some faith. That is all." Mercifully, most of us, most of the time, are as unconscious as are swimmers when life saving, of the true weight, not only of our sins, but of our selves. Just sometimes, perhaps only once in a lifetime, the waters recede, and we are left for an instant holding up, and staggering under, the unknown, unimagined, intolerable weight. Then the waters, or of grace, or of our habitual indifference, flood back, return again to support the unendurable burden. But for Newman the full consciousness, the entire awareness, of that weight was almost continual: he experienced it as tangibly as Christian his burden in the Pilgrims Progress, as the Ancient Mariner the dead albatross. It balanced his awareness of his immense intellectual gifts, saving him from spiritual pride, and it gave him a touching humility. So that he could write to Froude, "You and Keble are the philosophers, I am the rhetorician."

★

Jacob was always one of Newman's favorite characters, both for his wrestling, and for his vision. Above all, for the concreteness of his vision. And Jacob's vision, that was also Newman's, is another part of the meaning he can have for us—his almost palpable, tangible sense of the reality of the unseen world. Nor was he merely certain that *"alles Vergaengliche, ist nur ein Gleichniss"*—all that passes, is but a parable. For him also the Church herself, and all that we know of the mysteries of revealed religion, are but types of the realities they adumbrate. Realities that are there, not coming: because for Newman the spiritual was not an intrusion: all that it required was perception, recognition. Everywhere, immediate, actual, are always around us "the traces, so faint and broken, of a superimpending design."

As a child, he tells us, he wished the Arabian Tales were true, and thought "life might be a dream, or I an angel, and all this world a deception, my fellow angels by a playful device concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with the semblance of a material world." As he grew, Novalis's saying became true for him "that our life is no dream, but it may and should become one." Newman, adult, viewed the angels "as carrying on, as Scripture also implies, the Economy of the Visual World. I considered them as the real causes of motion, light and life, and of those elementary principles of the physical universe, which, when offered in their development to our sense, suggest to us the notion of cause and effect, and of what are called the laws of nature." Turn but a stone, Francis Thompson was to write later, and start a wing. Newman, in his "Apologia," quotes from his own Michaelmas Sermon of 1831: "I say of the Angels, 'Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God' ." And elsewhere, he writes that when people "think that they regret the past, then they are but longing after the future. It is not that they would be children again, but that they would be angels, and see God." Perhaps his feeling for angels came from his Jewish ancestry: it is fairly well established that, whilst his mother was of Huguenot stock, his father's origins were Semitic, and the name originally had been spelled Newmann. In our day, the painter, Marc Chagall, gives us a sense of the part played by angels in traditional Jewish life. At all events, Newman never was in the least dismayed by the advance of science, was unshaken by Darwin, and would, no doubt, have been delighted, though not surprised nor exultant, when Heisenberg's uncertainty principle fluttered the dovecotes of determinism.

All the above quotations are taken from the new, complete edition of Newman's works that is being published by Longman's Green at the rate of three volumes a year, and at the price of $3.50 a volume. The first three volumes, the "Apologia Pro Vita Sua," the "Idea of a University," and the "Grammar of Assent," each prefaced by a masterly introduction by the editor, are the 1947 quota, and are really most excellently well turned out: new type, not merely photographed from the earlier sets, and admirably unobtrusive, but essential notes, combine to make a really scholarly as well as a very handsome production. One might only wish, perhaps, that the publishers had not issued first the best known works, readily available in other editions, but rather had given us to start with, say the Sermons,

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the Verses, or the Meditations? But we need only be patient, for all are promised, and meanwhile, it would indeed be a poor heart that was not rejoiced by Doctor Harrold's three first volumes.

Newman, undeniably the greatest figure in English religious life in the nineteenth century, is easily also the most sympathetic. Manning, bringing his fist down with a mighty thump upon the table at a private dinner party so that the glasses all shook, and thundering, "I declare that I would light again all the fires of Smithfield tomorrow, if thereby I could but save one heretic soul," or Wiseman, dryly writing prim, unreadable, dusty tales about early Christians, are hardly rivals. Only Keble, whom Newman himself so loved and venerated, can challenge him.

Yet, for all Newman's gentleness, all his simplicity, he has never been exactly popular, nor has he ever been the object of popular devotion. No one, it is said, has ever been able to squeeze a miracle out of him, but how many have tried? Aubrey de Vere gives a wonderful description of Newman's coming into the room, "with a kind of balance, like a very great lady, absolutely without noise." Blennerhassett, who knew him well, says he never heard him say a harsh thing: of Father Loisy, an apostate priest, for example, he only said "How much he must have suffered! How must he still suffer." Yet Gerard Manley Hopkins, going on pilgrimage to Birmingham in the throes of his own conversion, relates that he found the great Cardinal as chilly as Saint Augustine, on a similar occasion, complained he found Saint Ambrose.

Seldom has one man been as indispensable as John Henry Newman. Whilst he remained an Anglican, he was the center, the life of the Oxford Movement; with his removal, that movement languished. Instead of a leaven that might have renewed the whole Church of England, it merely crystallized into yet another denomination, a flavor chosen by some, rejected by others, vanilla or chocolate. Newman brought with him to Catholicism in England not only a first class mind, but a style and language which rehabilitated Catholic writing, too long associated with treacley translations of insipid devotional manuals. Henri Bremond has said that Newman did for Catholicism in England what Butler's "Analogy" had done for the Established Church; it is certain that there is a close connection between the "Analogy" and the "Grammar of Assent," which it is said to have prompted.

Dr. Harrold, in his delightful comment on the "Apologia," points out the elasticity and multiformity of Newman's style: its colloquialism, as in "I was sore with the great Anglican divines, as if they had taken me in"; its dry wit, as "I was in a humor, certainly, to bite off their ears"; its withering contempt, as in such phrases as "our national form of religion professes little more than reading the Bible and living a correct life," or "it were well if none remained boys all their lives," or the whole savage passage on secular education, where he discovers to his unfeigned horror that according to the Minutes of a Committee of the Council of Education, Religion is included not under signs, as language, facts, as history, relations and laws, as science and mathematics, but under *sentiment*, as poetry and music. What has Truth to do with sentiment? he asks scornfully, anticipating Don Chapman's delightful "beware of feelings, Protestants have them." Again, Newman's power of sarcasm is evident in that passage where he foreshadows Father D'Arcy's admirable condemnation of the current "ideas of . . . Godhead, Ground, Brahman, Clear Light of the Void," etc. Thus Newman: "The Almighty is something infinitely different from a principle, or a center of action, or a quality or a generalization of phenomena. If by the word (God) you do but mean a Being who keeps the world in order . . . but only in the way of general Providence . . . such a God is not difficult for any one to conceive, not difficult for anyone to endure." Such a creed, that "of shallow men in every age" was anathema to Newman, who, from the age of fifteen, was conscious of an inward conversion of which he could write over twenty years later "I am still more certain [of it] than that I have hands and feet."

This first conversion made him "rest forever after in the thought of two, and two only, absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator." This apprehension caused him continually to realize, as he bluntly put it, that "religion is for practice, and that immediate." And he sledge-hammers the weaknesses of our feeble and superficial assents: "We are what we are," he declares, "and we use, not trust, our faculties. Our consciousness of self is prior to all questions of trust or assent: we do not confront or bargain with ourselves." Nor is his certainty of God less emphatic than his certainty of himself: God, he writes "is an Individual, Self-dependent, All-Perfect, Unchangeable Being, intelligent, living, personal and present. . . . He is One, Who is sovereign over, operative amidst, independent of, the appointments which He has made: One in Whose hands are all things, Who has a purpose in every event and a standard for every deed. Who has, with an adorable never ceasing energy implicated Himself in all the history of creation, the constitution of nature, the course of the world, the origin of society, the fortunes of nations, the action of the human mind."

What, then, does Dr. Newman mean?

He can mean for us a weaning from our attachment to those sweets with which Saint John of

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the Cross says God feeds us infants in the interior life; a more immediate perception of the drift of pinions at our clay shuttered doors, and a graduation from the puppy biscuit, of woolly and sentiment clouded thought and faith, to those theological bare bones upon which we may cut our teeth, but still must be careful not to break them.

Communications

HOLLYWOOD

Saint Louis, Mo.

TO the Editors: Apropos "The Film's the Thing" (Nov. 14, 1947.) Mr. Hartung is more liberal than logical, it seems. Hitherto, he says, Congressional inquiry has been only into what people "had done or not done, not into what they were thinking." Well, if taking out a communist membership card is not *doing* something, what is? "American" communism is a contradiction in terms, contradicted by Marx, Lenin, Stalin and the Party. By definition, the thinking behind that card is done in Moscow or the card is withdrawn. It is precisely the *unicity* of communism among political parties that justifies this investigation: it is (a) international, (b) committed to world conquest by *whatever means*. Whether a man is a Democrat or a Republican is his own business. Whether he thinks or even talks communistically is still his business. But when he acts on his thought, it is the business of any responsible, free government to call his hand. All the Committee did was to ask, "Are you a Communist Party member?" In other words, "Are you a member of that party whose declared purpose it is to supplant all free government by their own form of police state?" No wonder they wouldn't answer.

Many Americans seem to think that *inalienable* means *absolute*. But the right to life or liberty can be forfeited and is forfeited every day. And if a man's idea of happiness is life in a police state, why should he be permitted to pursue it actively with impunity? Unlimited tolerance ends by hanging itself in its own idiotic highmindedness. "Under *your* own principle, I demand tolerance; under *my* own, I deny it to you."

No literate American can justly accuse the USSR of deceiving him. Their objective, strategy, and tactics were outlined long ago and have never changed. They are obtainable at any public library cheek by jowl with *Mein Kampf*, another blueprint that appeared about 1925 —and went unread.

Outspoken criticism of government is a good thing—when it *is* critical. But there is a species of veiled criticism that is becoming very fashionable. "I don't object to *what* they're doing but only to the *way* it's being done." It sounds profoundly wise and immensely liberal. But I have yet to hear the speaker come up with any practical alternative. Just how many methods are there of investigating a suspect communist party member without invading the Bill of Rights? It has to be an open hearing, open to public and press, responsible and otherwise. If it was a big show, it was not the questioners that made it such.

It has developed, since Nov. 14, that the Committee did know "where it was going." It was going to prove, by producing membership cards, that ten men who tried to hide behind the Bill of Rights, were communists though American citizens. And now I would much like to know what the *Herald Tribune* could possibly have meant by the investigation being "an infringement of civil liberties." *The Rev.* LOUIS F. DOYLE, *S.J.*

St. Louis University.

Many of Father Doyle's points are well made; but I still think "the film's the thing," and the House Committee should look at a few of the suspect movies for evidence of communism. Now that these ten men who carried cards (and the Committee knew all the time that they were carrying cards) are losing their jobs, does the Committee plan to call in ten more men and then ten more, and when it has finished with Hollywood will it start on the stage, the press and the publishing houses? Is it illegal in this country to be a communist? If so, then the other industries should be informed, and not only Hollywood should be the goat—or perhaps Hollywood deserves what it got, since it's acting like a goat about the whole thing.—P.T.H.

THE AMERICAN AND ENGLISH CHILD

Wallingford, Pa.

TO the Editors: I have just read Anne Fremantle's article in your issue of November 21. It appears to me to be a defect in this very readable page that it generalizes from a small and wealthy minority of the population of England. I do not know the exact percentages, but a guess—less than one percent live in Elizabethan manor houses; less than one percent sent their children to the United States during the war; even in 1938, less than ten percent employed nannies; and less than ten percent sent their children away from home to school at the age of seven. J. C. ALEXANDRE.

THE LEPERS' CHRISTMAS

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: Our Redeemer gave the greatest example of interest in the cause of the lepers. His first recorded cure was that of a leper. His followers have continued His work during the succeeding centuries. Yet today we find that, despite the many advancements made in the science of medicine, there are still over 5,000,000 lepers in the world and that the disease still takes its greatest toll in those districts where the people, because of ignorance and poverty, are least capable of coping with it.

Each year during the Christmas season The Society for the Propagation of the Faith launches a campaign to raise funds for the LEPERS' CHRISTMAS FUND. Many of the asylums staffed by Catholic missionaries have suffered considerable, if not total, losses during the war, and the priests and sisters working in them are faced with large reconstruction costs. Others must expand their facilities to make room for an ever-increasing number of

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victims needing immediate hospitalization. Readers of THE COMMONWEAL have always proved their charity towards this truly Christlike work and we are certain their interest will continue this year. Offerings may be sent to the Director of The Society for the Propagation of the Faith in your own diocese or to

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92 Avenue de Marechal Foch
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Seine et Oise, France.

Convent of the Holy Child.
10 Via Boncompagni
Rome, Italy.

In addition to the CARE organization (50 Broad Street, New York 4, N. Y.) there is now SAFE, of 40 Exchange Place, New York 5, N. Y., which has "stockpiled" packages in all the principal cities in Germany and in Austria and claims to be able to deliver food parcels in those countries within a week of receipt of order in New York. The food packages of these organizations are $10 each.

The Stage & Screen

A Streetcar Named Desire

THE appearance of a playwright—and I mean exactly that honorable term—on Broadway is cause for reflection as well as rejoicing. Tennessee Williams is pretty interesting stuff and it is excellent to find him outright once again, in the big money, the big lights, all the hoopla, and still interesting. His present piece, again a character study, deals with the bare and brutal collapse of a middling (thirty-odd) southern belle in the environs of the "Quarter" in New Orleans. The circumstances are these: Blanche Du Bois an impoverished aristocrat arriving to visit a younger sister, finds herself involved in the loud, distasteful Bohemian doings which now constitute her sister's life. Her brother-in-law, an unrelieved male, is a considerable shock to her, and in the end, accomplishes her doom. Wishing to save his present marriage, he is relentless in pursuing every clue, marking every hesitancy, examining every affectation, so that finally none of her refinements, small fripperies nor (I am sure this must have been in the author's scheme) pitiable courage, can hold. Her past is revealed as a mess of nymphomania, plus a hundred further psychoses; her present is shown to be on the sheer edge of madness; and, exactly foiled by this man of her last lying chance at any kind of human relationhip with one of his friends, she is expertly introduced into the nearest asylum. I may add that the title is only luckily symbolic: evidently there *was* at one time in New Orleans, a streetcar called "Desire"; a second one called "Cemetery." This will be an evidence of municipal myth analogous to our own local snow-machines named incredibly, "Blue Brute" and "Joy."

As was surely obvious in his earlier "Glass Menagerie," the author here again proves his dramatic imagination. I think it is safe to say that every telling gesture and effect was securely wrought into the script before ever rehearsals started. You must envision a scene whose transparent wall allows both the heat-laden street as well as this burning room to come into focus. And the sounds are important: from upstairs, outside, all over. As the protagonist topplingly progresses among horrors, one hears her private mockeries: bells, a gunshot, voices. It is extraordinarily interesting to watch the stage being so precisely controlled. And further, the language is as sure. A kind of interior syntax is set up with complex, often lovely, period sentences (speeches) dealt to the heroine and opposed to the current, inarticulate slipshod of the others. Gertrude Stein was not wrong in tracking emotion as well as history through grammar.

In view of all this excellence, it will seem graceless to admit to some puzzles. The first of these has to do with theme. At first glance, it seems that Mr. Williams has conjured nothing more (nor less) than a melodrama, an especial Freudian case-history with all on stage only more or less diseased, the conflict being one of degree. And yet somehow the remembered lines do seem to indicate a further dimension as though the lying nobility projected by the heroine were not only lying, but rather mistaken, though nevertheless a strength. This dimension (and I confess it may very well be a figment of my own) is quite honestly never achieved by Jessica Tandy in the chief rôle. Miss Tandy is all sly, sick; she never moves. It is true she is wonderfully skilled and at ease in one of the longest parts ever devised, traveling from tears to shock and back expertly, but here again I quarrel. Her teariness is too often. Moreover, it is not psychopathically apt: a woman strung to this pitch could never, I think, find this relief. However, there is no question of the impressiveness of the performance, and of all the performances. Marlon Brando, Kim Hunter, and particularly that excellent actor, Karl Malden, reach such a degree of intensity in thoughtful, inspired playing that the conventional curtain calls at the end come as a distinct shock. However much one wants to

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applaud, one finds oneself still inside the play. In respect of convention there are two items: one the piece is divided poorly and, moreover, the divisions are poorly programmed. Here is a case for invention. In a serious play of some nine scenes, it would be wrong to have the house constantly rustling the playbill to discover the time intervals between each, and yet to know these intervals is seriously important for an understanding of the action. Mr. Williams had better put his mind to it. Both Elia Kazan, the director, and Jo Mielziner, the designer, seem to me to have done their utmost in maintaining and forwarding the author's words. However, Mr. Kazan has allowed the play to be billed as "Elia Kazan's Production Of . . ." Surely this is a strange steer, accenting a kind of false virtuosity in what should be the most objective job of all.

On the esthetic level, the two most important streams in modern theater will spring, I think, from the work of Lorca and Brecht. Mr. Williams is a Lorca man. That he has some of the poetry of his original is apparent, and that he has all of what I can only call the sad Freudian absorption has been twice proved. But whether he has the human charity I can only suspect. In a sense, here must be his next play: yes or no. (*at the Ethel Barrymore*)

Galileo

BRECHT. If Charles Laughton, internationally eminent actor, had to shop Broadway for years trying to sell this objective Morality to the managers, while Mr. Williams's subjective arrangements are earning limelight, this will be because ideas are a far more difficult trade than feelings, even in a time of chaos. It is to the Experimental Theatre's stern credit that the piece is now to be experienced, Mr. Laughton and all, for six performances. I think it's salutary stuff. To begin with, there is, I judge, so much evidence of whole growth on the part of the author that suddenly his method has become wholly useful. I will explain this as plainly as I can, and yet it seems to me that any thoughtful explanation will depend so clearly on paradox, it may appear sophistical. But how else explain a revolutionary who has gradually acquired an appreciation of heresy? a didacticist suddenly without a program? It had better be explained at once that Brecht can no longer be spoken of as an experimentalist: his scheme is too sure. Enmeshed in Marxism in the terrible German agony after the first World War, his ideology was received, and he set himself to woo a public by every conceivable convention, invention and device. A great (I believe) if untranslatable lyricist, he has employed the simplest rhymes, borrowed the most traditional music, worked every spatial and aural dimension to lure his audience to reflection. Accompanying all this working there is a kind of strangled theory dealt out in notes and in his interpreters' desperate findings which does quite clearly exile him from our Broadway brink-stage. I think the theory is post-important; it is the practice which has told. And yet, dismayedly, I am unsure that the practice tells in the present piece. To illustrate: Brecht here posits his Galileo not only as a theological heretic, but even further as an aware

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scientific one. Consistently introduced to enchanting music and children's voices, this primary thinker ends only as a man, overtly interested in his supper and concerned only that his stifled disciples should be as honest. All the Shavian-Fabian mode of planned heresy is rejected in the crux scene between master and student; revolution is rejected; a scrupulous picture of the medieval church is maintained; and the man remains. But this sequence is staged necessarily as brown against brown; or, if you will, as back against ground. Earlier we have had all the orthodox colors (I speak theatrically, as I must) deliberately played. Cardinal's red, Pope's white, the people's motley. But I am not sure that the pageantry does not outweigh the sense. I am not sure that earnest people would not come away from this serious examination of tyrannies, thinking of it only as an anti-Church tract. At the final curtain on Sunday night, a professional sophisticated audience stood steadily clapping like sixty-six. But Brecht's applause must be measured. Were these people clapping Mr. Laughton's sensitive good portrayal, Robert Davison's exact rememberable music, the furthermore layers, the fact of the Experimental Theatre's miraculous second season—or the point? I hope all. And yet I still wish the *show* might have been better spread. I wish that the most memorable song might not have been delivered to a marvelously (stupidly) Germanic sequence of clowns and doxies, never Italian and not fitting. I wish all of the effects might have contributed to, rather than detracted from, the written climax. Most of all, I wish that our present scientism might again engage the attention of this author. It seems to me that only his kind of serious compassion, and serious confusion, can theater the mess. And I think it had better be theatered. (*at the Maxine Elliott*) KAPPO PHELAN.

Escaping the New Look

NO DOUBT there is some connection between the current avalanche of costume pictures and the studios' desire to avoid making too many modern movies with clothes that may be ridiculously outmoded next year. In any case let's look at some of these films set in the distant and near past to see if the audience loses or gains by excursions from the present.

"The Lost Moment" is definitely our gain. Members of the Henry James cult may object to the changes that Scriptwriter Leonardo Bercovici made in adapting "The Aspern Papers," but adult moviegoers will welcome this fine Walter Wanger production that appeals to the intellect and still uses motion picture as it should be used in letting the camera set mood and reveal character. Martin Gabel's direction is greatly responsible for the success of this moving movie that keeps you on edge like the most exciting melodrama but never deviates from standards of good taste. The cast respond beautifully to Gabel's direction and the demands of the story: Robert Cummings as the American publisher who comes to Italy in the early 1900's to get some love letters written by a famous poet who disappeared there 70 years earlier; Agnes Moorehead as the 105-year-old woman who was the recipient of these letters; Susan Hayward, in an expert portrayal, as this woman's schizophrenic niece who sometimes thinks she is the one whom the poet loved. Eduardo Ciannelli and John Archer assist well in the supporting cast. Joan Lorring's performance is good too, but unfortunately her rôle is used by Director Gabel as a red herring in an otherwise well-knit plot. "The Lost Moment" is by no means the best movie ever made, but it restores your faith in Hollywood's ability to make films that appeal to the head as well as the eye and heart.

The rest of our costume pieces are much more ordinary affairs. *"Escape Me Never,"* stemming from Margaret Kennedy's once-popular novel and play, should probably never have been refilmed. Its story, ideas and even its nostalgic Bohemianism might well have been left to the 1920's when they no doubt seemed cute and daring. Even a fine actress like Ida Lupino can't sell us on the gamin heroine whom Bergner portrayed years ago. And Errol Flynn, as the wandering musician and composer, leaves much to be desired. Maybe the '40s have more sense than the '20s—or at least have grown up.

I reviewed *"Thunder in the Valley"* in the September 5, 1947, COMMONWEAL, at which time the picture was scheduled for release under its original title: "Bob, Son of Battle." Its producers, deciding that customers may think this Ollivant tale a war story, changed the title and release date. For the benefit of readers who haven't saved their September copies, I might repeat that this technicolor film is somewhat on the sweet side; but its theme, chock full of shepherds and dogs, and its good cast, headed by Edmund Gwenn and Lon McCallister, should appeal to youngsters. Their more sophisticated elders will no doubt prefer the less saccharine view of Scotland shown in "I Know Where I'm Going."

"Golden Earrings" comes under the classification of costume pictures mainly because its principal action takes place in Germany shortly before World War II and most of its characters wear either nazi uniforms or sentimentalized Gypsy apparel. Marlene Dietrich, in brown face as a Gypsy, dyes Ray Milland's skin and pierces his ears so she can help this English spy get a poison-gas formula and escape through Germany's back roads. Needless to say, this movie reeks with fights, chases, Gypsy superstitions and romantic sequences. You may wonder during all this costumed claptrap why we ever considered the nazis, who are so easily fooled by Marlene and Ray, as a formidable enemy.

"Caravan" also shows an Englishman posing as a Gypsy —this time in Spain. However this is only one of the make-believe situations in the British film based on Lady Eleanor Smith's novel about the perils of living in the 1830's. So much happens so fantastically to handsome Stewart Granger and the other actors involved that one cannot be sure whether to take this movie straight or as a satire on a picaresque period piece.

In *"Captain from Castile,"* Tyrone Power as the Spanish hero, pops in and out of jail so often that one suspects that this movie too is a satire—on the perils of the sixteenth century. I did not read Samuel Shellabarger's novel on which this full-blown historical movie is based, but I am told that it had some very authentic touches. If so, this authenticity has been hurried over; for the film

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rushes from one danger to another until after some two hours it ends very suddenly as Cesar Romero, portraying Cortez, Tyrone Power, now a captain, and most of the principals who haven't been killed off, plus a large number of extras, march on the Emperor Montezuma's city in the New World. In spite of the good technicolor background scenes, especially those photographed in Mexico, and the care taken in selecting costumes, "Captain from Castile" has such an air of slick bravado that it fails to hold one's interest even as a swashbuckling piece. Furthermore it has been so drastically edited after it was completed that one has difficulty in following the story. Curly-headed Tyrone looks awfully handsome.

The sets and costumes in *"Nicholas Nickleby"* also deserve high praise; but this new English importation is not another "Great Expectations." The Dickens plot has almost been reduced to a series of episodes. One can do worse, of course, than with a Dickens story; but the situations in this run toward the grotesque, and Cavalcanti's direction emphasizes Dickens's faults in depicting caricature rather than character. Cedric Hardwicke, as Nicholas's wicked uncle, and Bernard Miles, as his clerk, stand out of the mediocre cast. Derek Bond makes Nicholas as colorless as Dickens first painted him.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Books of the Week

Prize Stories of 1947: *The O. Henry Awards. Edited by Herschell Brickell. Doubleday.* $3.00.
The Best American Short Stories 1947. *Edited by Martha Foley. Houghton Mifflin.* $3.50.

IT MAY be assumed, without fear of contradiction, that these two collections do publish the best available stories in the course of a year. That the stories are selected from the magazines, popular as well as "little," need not in itself indicate mediocrity. Magazines have always been the medium of the short story. This is a matter of pure economics; and, indeed, it is the economics, as associated with the magazines, that have made the American short story, at its best and at its worst.

What impresses the mind as one peruses these annuals in the vain hope of discovering at least one story approximating a masterpiece is that the species is extinct, dead as the dodo. Don't misunderstand me. There are competent pieces in both anthologies, i.e., pieces written with great earnestness, with knowledge of psychology, and, now and again, with considerable writing skill. These few distinguished pieces stand out from the agglutinated mass of short stories in quality but not wholly in kind.

It is noteworthy that the editor of the O. Henry collection himself voices a pessimism with respect to the current short story. It is not in the best of health, he thinks, and he blames some of it on "the general uneasiness abroad in the world." He justly observes that the stories in his collection have technical excellence, but adds significantly that "the touch of the master hand, sure of itself and its material, and promising the production of any very large body of work by the exercise of the creative imagination was conspicuously absent from the picture." And if this statement is read in conjunction with Martha Foley's foreword to her collection, what a commentary we have on our time. Miss Foley says: ". . . More short stories are written and published here than in any other country in the world; last year there was a new record in the number of short stories appearing in our magazines and this year has exceeded even that record, both in the number of short stories published and in the number of new authors writing them." Surely little cause for congratulation.

I wish Mr. Brickell had amplified his statement about the creative imagination. Can there be any doubt that the whole trouble lies precisely here? The writers, liberated from faith, as they thought, liberated from the superstitions of religion, as they thought, have only exchanged the first for a vacuum and the second for a new set of superstitions—superstitions created by science, as Chesterton indicated.

In the short story today there is an obsession with the petty; there is stress on weak characters (as Mr. Brickell points out), on the "non-heroic individual." Scarcely less noticeable is the obsession with abnormal states of mind; incidentally, humor, which in the Anglo-Saxon world has always been a concomitant of sanity and common sense, has vanished. "Frankly," confesses Mr. Brickell, "the editor of this collection has not seen a humorous story in so long that he might be hard put to recognize one if he came across it."

On the other hand—and is not the explanation partly here?—there is the excessive preoccupation with Freud, with results truly devastating in the short story as in the other literary forms. The trouble is, a writer thinks there is a Freudian (no longer divine) explanation for every phenomenon, great and small. In building up his story, he seeks facts and circumstances to fit the theory he has acquired by dabbling in Freudism. The result is, the creative imagination is dispensed with, and the resulting product lacks all that freshness and spontaneity so necessary to a work of art. Dostoevsky, who came before Freud, employed what is called psychoanalysis today with the intuition of an artist, so that his words, "I philosophize like a poet," gain meaning. Psychoanalysis may or may not be an authentic science, it may or may not be useful in the clinic; it is thoroughly disastrous in art. It seems not a little ludicrous that the very people who ridicule confession to a priest are those who most loudly urge visits to professional confession specialists who subject their clients to the indecent exposure of their petty complexes which is often enough but another name for the yellow streak. And for this they ask their victims to hand out pretty fat fees.

What has all this to do with the short story and, spe-

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cifically, with these two collections? Everything. There are fifty or more stories in these two books. To read them all is to become conscious of the state of moral anarchy that is upon the world. They are symptomatic of the absence of visional integrity, of wholeness, of faith, in the writer as well as in the world he reflects, a world of little pieces, each of which if examined under the microscope would bring such results as only a microscope can give.

Putting all this aside, there is one criticism even more potent, and this concerns the reader no less than the writer. Lost in the putrescent morasses of their modern preoccupations, writers have lost the knack of telling a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. The facts are all in the text, but the expectancy, the zest, the wonder, are gone. Craftsmanship itself, however good, is not enough. Men write stories, but it seems of little importance whether we listen to them or not. The whole mood is one of much-of-a-muchness. The responsibility remains the writer's. It is possible, perhaps, to single out a story here and there which attempts to rise above the common mood; but the general impression is that of a world earth-bound, of a world which has lost the knack of raising its eyes upward to the stars. JOHN COURNOS.

Lions Under the Throne. Charles P. Curtis, Jr. Houghton. $3.50.

THIS STUDY of the Supreme Court is addressed with pleasant cynicism "to those laymen who know more constitutional law than they think they do, and to those lawyers who know less" by the learned author who writes with brilliance, humorous asides, tolerance, and determined liberalism. His historical and legal interpretations may be subjective and dogmatic. But a Bostonian who has progressed from Groton through Harvard College, the Ecole des Sciences Politiques, Harvard Law School, corporation law, lion hunting and sociology, to moderate New Dealism has earned the right to speak freely about the law and the courts. Possibly Bacon was right in his "Essays on Judicature" when he enjoined: "Let judges be lions, but yet lions under the throne." After all the courts are not above criticism in a democracy. The author is more hearty than the judges whom he would warn against legislating and would advise to read the times if not the election returns when they decide constitutional issues or cases involving retarded social justice.

Not every lawyer and proper Bostonian would depart so far from olden ways to defend "court-packing," to denounce Marshall's assumption of 1803 and Taney's use thereof in 1857, to minimize *stare decisis* and historical consistency as obstacles to social progress and reversed decisions, to regard the legislative branch of government rather than the judiciary as a check on arbitrary power, to define many questions as political rather than legal, and to seek the unexpressed intention of the framers as a rule of law or a means of legislating.

The court fight probably made the justices less sure of themselves for some of the justices did have political experience. It became less an organ of government. It realized that there were limitations on its authority beyond its own self-restraint as Justice Stone once remarked. Roosevelt won when he lost. Resignations and death were on his side. After all an amendment to the Constitution was a possibility, as another Roosevelt suggested twenty-five years earlier. More likely was the utilization by Congress of its power to determine the number of justices and to restate appellate procedure. Even Marshall learned that he had not the power of enforcement. A reactionary bench gave way before extended presidential tenure when the people spoke.

The author advises against pushing abstractions to their absolutes against practical sense. An amendment as an absolute expression of sovereignty may be undesirable. The Court should not be too forward in settling doubts the framers wisely refused to resolve. With approval, Mr. Curtis quotes the late Frank J. Hogan, president of the American Bar Association and cousin of Mr. James F. Byrnes, to the following effect:

> The conclusion to be drawn from all of this may, I think be stated simply: It is that reliance against the exercise of arbitrary power must be placed by the people henceforth in the legislative rather than the judicial department of the national government. Legislative independence and legislative wisdom are now America's almost sole reliance for the continuance of that security of the blessings of liberty for which the Constitution was framed and the Government of the United States of America created.

The sections of this little volume dealing with the First Amendment and the extension of the Fourteenth Amendment by judicial interpretation to include the first eight amendments are especially noteworthy in these days when civil rights cases challenge interest and when the four freedoms are more than a battlecry. Full attention is bestowed on the minorities as they fight for their rights in a modernized interpretation of the Constitution. There is little or nothing on covenant cases as a phase of uncivil discrimination. And nothing is written of the failure of the working Constitution to protect automatically the rights of men and groups. Nor is there any reference to majorities which may find themselves on the defensive. Provocative of thought and argument, this interpretive volume merits careful reading and a wide audience.

RICHARD J. PURCELL.

Rehearsal for Conflict. Alfred Hoyt Bill. Knopf. $4.50.

TOWARD the end of this fact packed book of 342 pages, the author writes of President Polk: "History has dealt harshly with him. Written chiefly by his political opponents and their descendants, it has presented him as little more than a small-minded mediocrity and denied him due credit for either the vision that gave his country its continental extent or the steadfastness with which, party man though he was, he placed the integrity of the Union above every other consideration." It is very evident that Alfred Hoyt Bill wrote with the determination *to prove* that Polk was as pure as the driven snow, so far as promoting a war against Mexico was concerned. Accordingly the book is characterized by the weaknesses of any book which attempts *to prove* something. Only those developments favorable to Polk are included; anything which militates against him is omitted. There is nothing about his campaign promises of 1844; nothing about his utterances which meant expansion, and expansion by force, if necessary. Polk's diary is quoted very cautiously. It is not made clear that Polk was committed to a war against Mexico even before the clash between the Mexican and United States troops north of the Rio Grande, in April, 1845.

The author dislikes any and all Mexicans. He also dislikes the Catholic Church, at least as it was functioning in Mexico a century ago. He saw in it a group opposed to

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absorption of Mexican territory by the United States. Apparently the author disapproves of such an attitude. True, the Mexicans were truculent but in view of the developments centering in Texas, it is easy to see why Mexico should have been suspicious of our intentions. If one will be willing to accept the author's endorsement of Polk and proceed to the substance of the book, the campaigns of the war, he will learn much about them. Very detailed accounts are given of Taylor's campaigns, although the author insists repeatedly that Taylor had no thought of provoking hostilities by advancing from the Nueces to the Rio Grande. He refuses to admit that peace could have been preserved had Polk decided to leave Taylor at the Nueces, rather than provoke the Mexicans by moving our troops further south. Scott's campaign from Vera Cruz to Mexico City is clearly traced. The author admits that our troops used repressive measures against some of the non-military population but maintains that such severity was necessary to preserve order. The reasons why Polk approved the treaty but disapproved of Trist, its formulator, are dealt with briefly. The author levels one of his very few criticisms at Polk for his shameful treatment of Trist. Scott is accorded less sympathy than Trist, although he was given the same shabby treatment. Polk died on June 19, 1849, worn out, according to the author, by his efforts to maintain peace. Other men were to serve as national leaders, and they were to bring on the disgraceful, unnecessary war of the 1860's. The war against Mexico, according to the author, was simply a rehearsal for that greater conflict.

PAUL KINIERY.

Miracles, A Preliminary Study. C. S. Lewis. Macmillan. $2.50.

SINCE the time of Hume the creed of the majority of educated non-Catholics has contained an unquestioned article of faith: "Miracles can't happen." Mr. C. S. Lewis once shared this belief in the impossibility of miraculous intervention, but his own strenuous and sincere reasoning eventually convinced him that this position could not meet the demands of logic. In "Miracles", his most recent work, Lewis offers the public an opportunity to inspect the arguments which led to his present conviction.

The scope of the book does not embrace historical proof for the actual occurrence of any miracle. It is a preliminary study. Its purpose is to clear away the prepossessions against the possibility of miracles and so to prepare the reader to make an unbiased historical inquiry on his own. Hume's argument and the naturalistic position are clearly and forcefully presented. Then with equal clarity and forceful logic the fallacies and inconsistencies are laid bare. Mr. Lewis impales naturalism on the horns of a dilemma. For the naturalist nothing can exist except nature. Nature is the total interlocked system of irrational forces and their products. Whatever exists must be produced by this system, occur within it and be explained by it. Miracles, therefore, are rejected by naturalism; for a miracle would be an invasion of nature from the outside, and the first premise of this philosophy denies the possibility of such an invasion. What, then, asks Lewis, will naturalism say about human reason? Either reason *is the product of irrational forces, or it does, so to speak,* invade nature from the outside. If it is the product of irrational forces, it is in no way superior to the causes that produced it. The causes were irrational, so human thought is equally irrational. Then the very thought process by which the naturalist attempts to establish his philosophy is irrational, and naturalism has destroyed its own credentials. On the other hand, if reason is not the product of the irrational forces of nature, but rather invades nature from the outside, the foundation of naturalism collapses. Nature can be invaded; in fact, it has been invaded by human reason. Why then, cannot other invasions take place in the form of miracles?

In the development of this argument, however, Lewis errs on the side of excess. He is eager to make his point with regard to the relation that exists between reason and nature; so eager that he chooses to consider reason as a supernatural element in man. The main argument of the book suffers from this unfortunate extension of the definition of the supernatural, a cardinal term; and the clarification in the appendix comes too late to repair the damage.

There are other defects in the book; and the reader will do well to be on his guard against an easy acceptance of the bad with the good. For example, on page forty-two Lewis tells us: "I do not maintain that God's creation of nature can be proved as rigorously as God's existence . . ." If I correctly understand this statement in its con text, Lewis has deserted the very logic by which he proved God's existence.

Perhaps the greatest merit of the book lies in its strikingly original and apt analogies. Often enough the difficulties experienced in accepting Christian doctrine are merely the result of a failure to grasp the real meaning of the dogma involved. Lewis knows how to use the familiar to aid our understanding of the unfamiliar.

JOSEPH D. SCHELL.

Step Down, Elder Brother. Josephina Niggli. Rinehart. $3.00

MONTERREY with its 300 years of history in the shadow of Saddle Mountain is the setting of Josephina Niggli's novel of contemporary Mexican life, and more than in most stories the place is a part of the plot. Miss Niggli knows the old city like her own back yard. Her love for its local color and her sympathetic understanding of the Mexican mind shine on every page, and she has a sufficient knowledge of Mexican history to give depth to her background.

The story is about the aristocratic Vázquez de Anda family, who have done so much to make Monterrey what it is and who, in turn, have been molded into a pattern by the Creole culture of their environment. But the city is changing under the influence of the strong young force of the mestizo, half Spanish and half Indian, who is beginning to assert himself. And besides being affected by the new social order, the Vázquez de Anda family is changing internally, as its children arrive at maturity, declare their independence, fall in love, and throw off the tyranny of the rich banker uncle who has dictated all the important decisions for a generation. There are romances, conflicts, crises, and surprises galore. The characters are widely diversified and well drawn. The center of interest is always Domingo, the eldest son, who has everything except happiness. Bound by invisible cords, he is dominated by influences he is not strong enough to overcome, and his story is a study in frustration. The novel is happily free from the lush lubricity of such books as "Forever Amber" and "The Hucksters," but it is infected with the

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naturalism characteristic of most contemporary fiction. Fornication is planned and committed without any sense of sin and it is not followed by remorse.

Miss Niggli's "Mexican Village," a collection of sketches published in 1945, created something of a sensation. This is her first novel. She has not as yet fully mastered the art of the longer narrative form. She is not so overwhelmingly convinced of the reality of her story that she lets it tell itself. Even making allowances for the fact that Márgara is like the Xtabay of the Mayan legend, Domingo's love for her, especially at first, seems inadequately motivated, and his giving her up at the end is equally hard to understand. The narrative lags a little at times in the wrong places. Miss Niggli's reach exceeds her grasp, but she has a whacking good story to tell.

BONAVENTURE SCHWINN.

The Good Night at San Gabriel. Susana Clayton Ott. Harper. $1.50.

THE PRACTICAL difficulties experienced at the San Gabriel Mission in the California of the late eighteenth century when a Christmas mystery play was put on by the Indians of the vicinity comprise the nub of this colorful little story. Greatest of all the obstacles are the lengths to which one Pablo went to win the prize that would gain him the rôle of the Archangel Gabriel and the admiration of his beloved Juanita, who plays the part of Our Lady. Father Junípero Serra is there in person to award the prize. In the play itself there are little angels in Heaven, a number of shepherds, the Devil in Hell and on earth and all sorts of quaint sets and native stage devices. A roundabout way of telling the Christmas story which attains high plausibility, much simple fun and deep orthodox conviction.

Echoes of the Hunting Horn. Stanislaus Lynch. Devin. $4.00.

ANY devotee of horses and hunting, in fact, any lover of spiraling outdoor excitement and sport, should be well pleased with this collection of vignettes so deftly and vividly drawn by Stanislaus Lynch. Olive Whitmore's spirited drawings also add zest to "Echoes of the Hunting Horn." Unlike many sporting books, "Echoes" would appeal, I think, to anyone whose only acquaintance with a horse was on a carousel. Mr. Lynch writes naturally and without the frequent condescension of the accomplished horseman. His gusto and enjoyment are contagious as only an Irishman's can be in telling of his favorite sport. The author's humorous affection for his subject endears it and him even to the uninitiated. The excitement of a point-to-point, (author up) Mr. Lynch's Gaelic fury at the misuse of barbed wire, the tender instructions on how to break in a young horse or an unentered puppy, the specialness of the country-side in the early dawn, these and many other sides of hunting and racing are richly described. Only an Irishman could feel so deeply over his horses and hounds, and few could successfully convey that emotoion in words. Stanislaus Lynch is a poet of the chase and the turf-track who, Merciful Heavens! avoids any sentimentality in his writing.

ELIZABETH JOHNSON

The Stoic. Theodore Dreiser. Doubleday. $3.00

IN "The Financier" and "The Titan", Theodore Dreiser put his hero on a high dramatic plane. With his own moral energy and his powerful urge to construct

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and to complete his conceptions in every detail, he turned Frank Algernon Cowperwood into an epic character.

"The Stoic" which finishes the trilogy, is a step down from power. Dreiser's treatment of Cowperwood's last adventure, an attempt to seize control of London's subway system, is diffident compared to the business chapters in "The Titan." Even though the novel is only completed through notes put together by Dreiser's executors, the chapters leading to the end seem unfinished and undecided. Still, one is grateful to be reminded again of Theodore Dreiser, and "The Stoic" is not without its moving passages. With no immediate artistic tradition to fall back on, he was in the line of the great American authors who, like Whitman or Melville, built new art with their own creative energy. You can reject Dreiser in part, for whatever clumsiness you choose, but you cannot reject him as a whole. He never turned aside from the honesty and the force with which he pursued his great conceptions.

JOHN HAY

Death Valley Handbook. George Palmer Putnam. Duell. $2.00.

THIS serviceable little handbook is intended primarily as a supplement to fill the gaps in Mr. Putnam's well-known "Death Valley and its Country." It catalogs concisely the Valley's flora, fauna, rock-formations, weather-facts, and historical events. Though necessarily of restricted interest, it is a uniquely valuable reference work in its field.

The Inner Forum

Report from Lafayette

THE RECENT—November 23-26—Silver Jubilee National Convention of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference at Lafayette, Louisiana, gave evidence of how much can be accomplished, even in twenty-five years, when Catholic principles are interpreted for and applied to contemporary life.

The list of topics covered at the two mass meetings and seven sectional meetings of the Convention, was amazingly wide but never divergent: *Liturgy and Rural Life, Soil Conservation, Visual Education for Rural Children, Christian Recreation, Cooperatives*—to mention only a few. However, it is at the meetings of the diocesan directors that the projects scheduled for immediate emphasis and action are most thoroughly discussed and plotted. On the spiritual side, Rev. Edward O'Rourke, Director of Catholic Students at the University of Illinois, is pressing for the widespread establishment of Catholic Action cells among farm youth. Modeled upon the European *Jociste* movement (which quite unabashedly was copied from the communists), the cellular technique is to work with a small picked group of leaders. By intensive indoctrination and direction, they become leaders for good, out of all proportion to their numbers. The technique is based upon the principle that it is easier to take a leader and make him a saint, than to take a saint and make him a leader.

The present soil conservation program, largely local in administration, is considered by the NCRLC as more in accord with the Conference's ideals, than are the changes proposed in the Cooley Bill. An extract from a Resolution adopted by the Diocesan Directors of Rural Life at

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the recent convention will illustrate the NCRLC philosophy in the matter: "To be effective, such (soil conservation) programs must be understood by and be acceptable to the farmers themselves. Ultimately, soil conservation must be applied and carried out by those who actually till the soil. The National Catholic Rural Life Conference believes that the security of our farmers and of our agriculture is so essential to the national welfare and to world peace that any legislation which would minimize the farmers' present efforts in soil and water conservation through the current democratic program of soil conservation districts would have unfortunate results.

"We believe that the institution of soil conservation districts, with research assistance from Federal and State Experiment Stations, educational assistance from State Extension Services, and with technical assistance from the US Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service, is functioning in a way that best serves the interests of effective soil and water conservation, the farmers, the rural parish, and the nation."

On the problem of Displaced Persons the NCRLC has taken a definite stand, as manifested in active support of the Stratton Bill for the admission of DP's to the United States. Passage of the Stratton Bill at the next Congress may well depend—departing as it does from established immigration policy—upon interested organizations being able to show a definite plan for the financing and resettlement of the admitted DP's. Just, where, in other words, shall we place them? How many can we place? How much money is available to finance their readjustment?

It is in the answering of these questions that the NCRLC has undertaken to blaze the trail, working hand in hand with similarly interested organizations. Aside from the fact that some 65 percent of the DP's will be Catholic, the Conference sees them as a definite asset to rural America.

A final evaluation of the NCRLC's labors these past twenty-five years may be aided by one simple fact: a generation ago, the average priest in the country parish felt that he was in exile, and marked time patiently until he should be called to a city parish. That mentality has to a great extent disappeared. Today the country pastor is forgetting about the city in learning to love the land—a love which easily imparts itself to his people. He has discovered an exciting life, and permanent satisfaction, in the rural apostolate.

LEO J. TRESE.

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*One of Our New Novels**

Leon Bloy's THE WOMAN WHO WAS POOR

In the ordinary novel we read about people as mediocre and anaemic as ourselves: in fact any given character might be oneself crawling across the page. After such reading, Leon Bloy's novel *The Woman Who Was Poor* crashes in our ears like an explosion: we seem to be watching not men but monsters. But the ghastly thing is that here too the people are ourselves — as Bloy sees us.

The truth is that Bloy sees life life-size. We habitually do not. As we look at the surface of human action, or an inch or two below, our vices and other people's look commonplace enough, merely a ruffling of the surface. Lust, for instance, has a pretty wide range: superficially it means no more than a nice little man getting nice little thrills or a nasty little man getting nasty little thrills. But there's nothing "little" about what is really happening in the bottom of the soul—the continuing strife between nothingness and Omnipotence. So Bloy sees it. His people are like planets and comets and dead suns and this is no exaggeration since an immortal soul dowered with knowledge and will is immeasurably more magnificent in itself and more catastrophic in its ruin than any planet. We are prepared to concede this as a fact but think no more about it. Bloy could never stop seeing it, or see it tranquilly.

The Maggots Writhing

Therefore his villains particularly seem monstrous. He makes us see the very maggots writhing in them — Poulot and his mistress, Isidore Chapuis and his — she looked like "a mop for cleaning mortuary slabs in a leper hospital." But what he calls "respectable people" are even more horrifying — perhaps because their resemblance to ourselves is more easily seen. Gacougnol's heir, and the agent who passed Leopold and Clotilde's premises as sanitary, and the daily-Mass-going landlady grinding her tenants—all these would probably have looked normal enough to us if we had met them in the flesh. But here we meet them in the spirit and for the moment we understand the "delicious sensation" Bloy felt that day in 1897 when so many rich Catholics were burnt to death in the fire that broke out at a charity bazaar.

But with that we touch our finger on his one great weakness. He did not quite see that even mediocre people, even utterly depraved people — even Isidore Chapuis—are loved by God. Chapuis and Ballot and the rest do not repent: one almost feels that Bloy would have been disappointed if they had. "I should be ashamed to treat a mangy dog as God treats me," Bloy once cried. And that is exactly how he treats Chapuis. Yet if the one sorrow is not to be a saint (as Clotilde says at the end), then Chapuis is the most sorrowful thing in the book—far more so than Clotilde herself.

Words Like Lava

But this is a reflection that comes afterwards. While we are reading the most moving story of Clotilde Marechal, we live in Bloy's world and judge with his judgments. To have read the book is "a revelation, like coming out of the void." For good or ill, Bloy had to write *The Woman Who Was Poor*. A critic has said that Bloy's words were like lava, and nobody blames a volcano for hurling its lava off its own racked chest. So Bloy wrote his novel: and it is a marvel to us that he ever slept quietly with all that monstrous life inside him; and indeed there is no reason to think that he ever did sleep very quietly either before or after writing it.

In Europe *The Woman Who Was Poor* has had a most profound influence on all writing throughout this century. In England and the United States the book started more quietly—after all it was different, and that is an awful handicap: if novels aren't all exactly alike, where are we? But if it started quietly it will not die quickly. I think religious novels in the English language will begin to show some effect of Bloy.

—By F. J. SHEED, reprinted from THE TRUMPET (Did you get your copy?)

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